

The Johl Residence  
Bodie, Mono County  
California

HABS No. CAL-1922

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PHOTOGRAPH  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction  
1000 Geary Street  
San Francisco, California

PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT  
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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THE JOHL RESIDENCE

Bodie, Mono County, California

ADDRESS: Main Street, Bodie, California  
OWNER: State of California  
OCCUPANT: Vacant  
USE: None

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Ghost Town of Bodie is a Registered National Historic Landmark, and California Historical Landmark #341.

Placer gold was first discovered here in July, 1859, and a quartz vein was located in August, 1859; but, though many efforts were made to exploit the area, it was not until 1874 that the great potential wealth of the district became promising. Bodie reached its peak in production in 1879-80 when the population was 10-12 thousand. Total production of gold and silver from the district is estimated at 90-100 million.

The Johl Residence represents a typical home of a prosperous business man in the Town of Bodie.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Eli Johl, a native of Germany, came to Bodie in its hey day and, with Charles Donnelly (CAL-1923), bought out the City Market on Main Street from the Warren Brothers. Eli was a rather uncouth fellow and to his lot fell most of the slaughtering and rough work while his partner tended shop.

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Donnelly married Annie Pagdin, a haughty and pretentious English girl, who was something of an artist and had supported herself and her mother by giving painting lessons and selling some of her work. She aspired to be the social leader of Bodie.

Eli had no such aspirations and sought solace to his loneliness with the girls on Maiden Lane and Virgin Alley. There he met and fell in love with a lovable and pretty blond, known only as Lottie. She proved to be a good and devoted wife. Eli lavished fine clothes and jewelry on Lottie and bought one of the finest cottages in Bodie in an effort to have her "accepted" and respected. The house had been owned by H. C. Osborne, publisher of the Daily Free Press, and had been moved to a location on the east side of Main Street after the fire of 1892.

The rivalry between Annie Donnelly and Lottie grew severe. Eli was convinced that his wife could become a finer artist than Annie; so encouraged her with lavish praise of her work. Today, the paintings by the two rivals hang in the Cain Museum at Bodie.

Lottie's effort for acceptance as an equal culminated in a masquerade ball. Eli had sent to San Francisco for the finest costume that could be had. Lottie dazzled the participants and the judges at the ball with her bejeweled costume and easily was judged the winner of the prize for the best dressed lady. At the unmasking at midnight they learned the identity of the winner; an error was found in the judging and Lottie was asked to leave the party. Another costume was awarded the prize.

After this rebuff, Eli and Lottie lived on in Bodie, keeping to themselves. Finally Lottie fell ill and required medical attention. The doctor ordered a prescription from the local drugstore. That night Lottie died. Rumors were rife that she had committed suicide. However, an autopsy demanded by Eli disclosed that, by a tragic error on the part of the druggist, a deadly poison had been included in the preparation of the prescription. No criminal findings were ever made in the case.

Eli was grief stricken and was determined that in death Lottie should triumph by being "accepted" for burial "inside the fence" of the cemetery. The request was granted by the authorities and Eli proceeded to erect a monument that would be second to none. He had an elaborate iron fence erected around the plot with a gate to lock out intruders.

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On each memorial day he erected a canopy over the grave which he decked with flags and bunting.

Eli Johl bought out Donnelley's interest in the butcher shop and lived in Bodie for several years after the death of Lottie. On the decline of the camp, he sold his house with all its furnishings and left Lottie's paintings hanging on the walls. He moved away without leaving any knowledge of his destination. It was said that he perished in a train wreck.

The house was moved to its present location, where Mrs. Mary A. McConell raised a large family. She served as postmistress of the last Bodie Post Office, which had been established in the house.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND SOURCES

California State Historical Landmark No. 341  
Cain, Ella M., The Story of Bodie, Fearon Publishers,  
San Francisco 1956  
Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. 56-11439  
HABS Report, 1962: CAL-1918 Bodie - General

#### ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

##### EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions - L shaped plan, approx. 23' by 44' overall, one story, five room cottage.

Wall Construction - Typical board construction with studs set flat with rustic on exterior and square edged boards horizontal at inside. Total thickness, 3 inches.

Openings - Front door: 2'-8" x 6'-8", four panel raised mouldings, octagonal bottom panel; top panel, circular at top and octagonal at bottom. Transom over. Opening framed

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with pilaster boards and classic cap supported by scroll brackets with band-sawn design.

Front windows: double hung tandem 1/1 light double-hung windows with cap supported by brackets similar to front door.

Other windows: 6/6 light double hung without parting bead.

Roof - Gable ends, approx. 40° pitch, wood shingles. Barge board with band-sawn and cut-out designs. Rafters, 2x3, laid flat, boxed in at overhang.

Chimneys - Terra Cotta chimney pot of fancy moulded design.

## INTERIOR

Floor Plan - Entrance vestibule, 3'-6" x 3'-6", taken out of corner of Living Room, which is approx. 13' x 21½'. Living Room opens to two rooms across width of house which in turn open to one room across back of house and one room to northeast corner of house. The house served as Bodie Post Office during its final use and it appears likely that the large Living Room had been sub-divided prior to that. Ceiling height in front rooms, 11', other rooms 8'-7".

Floors - Throughout are 1x4 T&G pine.

Walls - Single board construction without studs which were covered with cheese cloth and wall paper. Ceilings also papered.

Doors - Four raised panels.

Vestibule - Panelled walls and ceiling.

Hardware - Rim locks at all doors except mortise lock at front door.

Lighting - Electric - originally, kerosene lamps.

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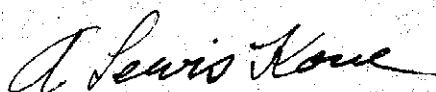
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Heating - Wood stoves.

GENERAL SETTING

Presently on west side of Main Street without setback and with flag stone sidewalk at street front. Yards and walks are neglected. The house is deteriorating.

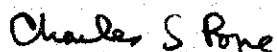
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December 1962

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DATE: Dec 21, 1962